AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

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AGITATE ! EDUCATE ! ORGANIZE !

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The A. F. of L. Weekly News Letter contains a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative, and political fields, and such other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

FORCED ARBITRATION OPPOSED BY GOMPERS

New York, Feb. 7.—Compulsory arbitration in any form violates the principles of American liberty and will be resisted by labor, declared President Gompers at the annual meeting of the national civic federation.

The A. F. of L. executive said there were numerous instances where labor, while many employers are fair, "is a rule that which the employer considers is that which the insistent demands of the workers press home." Compulsory law would put "all only in private employment and public utilities, but in equally every bit of government employes, whether they be of federal, state or national governments."

"Look at any country on the face of the globe," said you will find that the country in which there are fewer strikes, or no strikes at all—you will find in that country the poorest standard of life as compared with any other people or any other country. You will find that industrial dependence, servility and docility exist in the country in which there are no strikes. You will find in these countries the most backward, the least development in industry and commerce; you will find in these less civic pride of the people in and for their country; you will find impotency rampant in the country, either for its own cohesion or for international defense.

"In these countries you will find less civilization than in any of the countries in which strikes occur. If the absence of strikes meant industrial and commercial prosperity; if the absence of strikes meant the independence of a country, its power, its wealth, then China ought to stand at the head of civilization."

WHO TELLS THE TRUTH?

San Francisco, Feb. 7.—"On the occasion of the recent raids for the purpose of arresting communists," says the Seamen's Journal, "the reading public was told by some newspapers, among them the New York Times, that it was the intention of the reds to extend the reign of terror and the civil strife until they became a revolution.

"Not the slightest bit of evidence to this effect has found its way into print. We have been given only the bare allegation. If there was any truth in such a charge, then it would naturally follow that numerous influential trade union members would be found involved in the communist organization, and it is natural to expect that they would be taken in the raids.

"No trade union member of any prominence at all has been listed as among those arrested. Lists published so far make no mention of trade union relations of those arrested. Now, it is entirely possible that some of the arrested communists were members of unions. It is absolutely certain that their influence as union members was exactly zero, and that whatever plotting they did was entirely outside of trade union halls.

"Newspaper headlines and newspaper stories associated communism with the steel and coal strikes were gratuitous, silly and perhaps malicious, in the background with a strong authority. Probably, however, this association was made by chance. The average trade union offers about the most unstable ground for anti-American and anti-democratic plotting that exists in this broad land.

"The A. F. of L. executive council didn't give up its devotion to democracy the day the armistice was signed."

TOO MUCH REGULATION.

Boston, Feb. 7.—Regulation of strikes, free speech and free assembly is being developed in the point where the morals of Massachusetts people are to be regulated. It is establishing a censor board for the movies. "This legislation is proposed in a bill introduced in the state legislature, and like similar suggestions, it is in the interest of the public.

"Under the bill standards will be formulated that will prohibit the exhibition of films that are immoral, inhuman, or of such a character that their exhibition would tend to corrupt or tend to undermine the health or corrupt the morals of children or of adults."

Opponents of the legislation are asking what would prohibit legislation to debar any literature, drama or work of art that a sharp-eyed state board would vote immoral.

"It is the unlimited power of this bill is entirely logical for the regulators to regulate the morals of a community when the state assumes the right to fasten workers to their jobs and decide how long if they would quit their employment."

PROFITS OF COAL OWNERS.

Washington, Feb. 7.—At hearings before the president's mediation commission officers of the United Mine Workers presented statistics officially issued by the treasury department and financial reports showing that in 1916 there were 55 mining companies that made 15 per cent on their capital stock, 211 made 20 per cent, 295 made 25 per cent, 279 made 30 per cent, 252 made 40 per cent or more, 171, 50 per cent or more, 115 per cent or more and eight companies made over 1,000 per cent.

Regardless of all increases, it was stated, mine labor is receiving today fewer cents out of every dollar paid to operators for coal than in 1913 and 1914.

WARNING FROM OKLAHOMA.

Oklahoma City, Okla., Feb. 7.—Oklahoma of the state federation of labor has warned not to be lured into this state by claims of anti-union employers, who would establish non-union conditions.

In Tulsa a few multi-millionaire oil men have organized "Chamber of Industrial Freedom of Labor," which declares for open-shop "Americanism" and seeks to transfer the power of trade unions to a movement dominated by them.

The anti-unionists are appealing to the patriotism of the people and to all them in their union-smashing campaign.

GAINS BY BOOKBINDERS.

Indianapolis, Feb. 7.—Officers of the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders report a membership gain of 3,367 during the past year. Decent wage gains are recorded in Olympia, Wash.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Keene, N. H.; Portland, Ore.; Tulsa, Okla.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Paris, Texas, and Denver.

GET EIGHT-HOUR DAY.

Mobile, Ala., Feb. 7.—Hotel cooks and waiters have established the eight-hour day and secured wage increases.

COAL OWNERS BENEFIT; MINERS RECEIVE LESS

Washington, Feb. 7.—By statistics presented to the commission of mediation by the president, to do justice differences between them and soft coal owners, the coal miners showed that their share of the dollar paid by the public to the coal owner is constantly diminishing, while the coal owners' share is increasing.

In the central Pennsylvania field, for example, the miners' share was cut in 1916, and in 1918 and 1919 increased to 55 cents, or 16.7 per cent. During the same period, the coal owners' share increased from 6 cents to 25 cents, or 316.7 per cent.

The coal miners claim that, in 1919, when there was no fixed government control of prices served to cut down earnings, the coal owners' total net profits increased more twice as large as the average for the five years before this country entered the war.

"In the light of all these facts," the coal miners say, "it is absurd for the operators to put forth the claim that if the mine workers are paid a living wage the public will suffer a further advance in the cost of coal and a resultant further increase in the cost of living.

"While the mine workers, during our great national emergency were working every day possible to increase production, they were receiving wages far below their present purchasing power, which was at a level of actual impoverishment, and at the same time were sending money out of their families to France and straining their inadequate resources to the utmost in the purchase of liberty bonds to help to aid our common cause, the coal miners, who were fighting and helping to win the war by taking exortions and profits from the government, from our war industries and from our domestic consumers, and were telling our fathers and sons, who were protected against the price of coal, that the high prices were due to the exaction of high wages by the mine workers."

SOFT WORDS NO REMEDY.

Washington, Feb. 7.—Soft words made by cabinet members in no solution for profiteering, in the President Gompers, the American Federationist, current issue.

"The profiteer is a creature who lives by moral if not by legal corruption, a ruthless exploiter and a foe to society," says the trade unionist. "There must be action of a kind that goes to the root of the problem. The conference of representatives of the American Federation of Labor recently in Washington on December 12, placed before the nation the remedy for the profiteering evil—a remedy that will remedy, a prescription that will cure. It is again the remedy pronounced by that gathering:

"Credit is the life blood of modern business. At present under the control of private financiers it is monopolized and used to serve only the needs of production, but the demand of financial agencies to levy a toll upon consumers is so high as 'the traffic will bear.'

"Credit is inherently social. It should be accorded in proportion to confidence in production possibilities. Credit as now administered does not serve industry but burdens it; it increases unduly and comes at the expense of earned income. It is in the center of the revolved force that disturbs the spirit and purpose of industry.

"Credit is the commodity, and use of credit to serve productive needs and not to increase the income of parasites is the purpose. Control over credit should be taken from financiers and should be vested in a public agency, able to administer this power as a public trust in the interests of all the people."

METAL STRIKERS ENJOINED.

San Francisco, Feb. 7.—Federal Judge Van Fleet has issued an injunction against striking metal workers picketing the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Company. In the court charged violence among the strikers' attorneys asked the company's attorneys to cite one violent act and the "workers will disperse."

The company insisted that picketing is interfering with its shipbuilding work and that its contract with the government will not permit a wage raise to the striking workers.

The strikers told the court that the company has repeatedly offered even a higher rate if the men return to work as individuals.

The court held that peaceful picketing is a violation of the law. The strikers have informed the court that his injunction will be as effective in Bethlehem as it was in Mare Island's injunction in mining case.

MOTHER WORKS; NEED LESS.

Boston, Feb. 7.—The average weekly cost of living for a man, wife and three children under 14 years in the mill town of Lawrence, Mass., is $26.65 a week, according to a national industrial conference board, representing several employers' organizations. A more liberal standard calls for $31.85 a week.

The report states that its figures are based on the theory that the mother stays at home, but in many Lawrence families the mother, as well as the father, is at work.

The "liberality" of the board's estimate is shown in its statement that "the cost of living on the minimum standard usually burn about three tons of coal a year."

REST DAY FOR WAITRESSES.

San Francisco, Feb. 7.—The state industrial welfare commission has ordered a full-time rest day for women in hotels and restaurants shall be given every week in the future. The California eight-hour law makes no provision for a rest day, but the welfare commission has asked more state constitution, which gives it power to regulate working conditions of women and minors.

TEST ANTI-PICKETING ACT.

Indianapolis, Feb. 7.—Trade unionists have appealed the injunction and anti-picketing ordinance to the state supreme court. The case was argued last September by the common counsel and makes it illegal to picket a plant.

BIG SUGAR PROFITS.

Washington, Feb. 7.—A profit of 160 per cent is being made on sugar, exported from the Philippines to middlemen, jobbers and brokers, reports the department of commerce.

Sedition Law Advocates Would Destroy American Ideals

Washington, Feb. 7.—The hurriedly prepared sedition bill by organized labor and others against which Senator Graham sedition bill has caused the sedition law advocates to shorten sail, and are now attempting to sugar coat this vicious proposal.

The claim that this legislation is necessary to protect the government against overthrow causes opponents to ask why the advocates do not act under existing federal laws.

Section four of the federal criminal code provides for the punishment of anyone who "shall incite or engage in rebellion or insurrection against the authority of the United States or its laws."

Section six makes it unlawful for any person or persons to conspire to overthrow or to destroy by force the government, or by force to prevent, hinder or delay the execution of any federal statute.

The federal criminal code gives the attorney general ample power to proceed against anyone who uses or advocates force against the government the law provides.

But these laws make no provision to punish a man who criticizes the government or advocates that governmental changes be made in a lawful manner. In short, the United States criminal code makes no attempt to gag speech or press in peace times. This is what the sedition law advocates object to. They want the law so that they and a man will be held guilty of sedition if he says or writes something that the government may think tends to induce or cause another man to commit an act the court would hold unlawful.

This theory is called "constructive sedition."

In the seventeenth century the notorious Judge Jeffreys of England held that "words are treasons and writings sedition because he had in his possession a private memorandum written by himself. The court said this paper might fall into the hands of another and if he should read the memorandum, and might be impelled to attack the king. After a long fight the English people annulled this attempt to regulate opinion.

Sedition law in peace times means a continuance of war times. It is an espionage law under another name. A man can be arrested for expressing an opinion. Editors will be in constant doubt as to whether their discussion on a vital question is seditious. Police spies flourish. Free speech is at the will of federal judges and district attorneys. The postoffice department decides a new law is violated because an opinion some official says is seditious. And criticism of the government can easily be construed as seditious. Under a sedition law any strike could be declared an attack on the government. The strike officials could be held for their prosecution and the treasury confiscated and their officers raided under the sanctity of law.

Under a sedition law it would be a criminal offense to criticise an injunction judge. To attack an order like Judge Anderson's injunction against the miners would be an attack on government. Such criticism would be sedition and might be impelled to attack the king. After a long fight the English people annulled this attempt to regulate opinion.

With a sedition law in force, the advocates of compulsory training, the privateers and profiteers who want to "clean up" Mexico and every other element that favors things as they are could call on the government to silence any and every distasteful agitation.

Sedition laws in peace times mean an abandonment of the American theory that government is subordinate to the people. "Government of, by and for the people" is replaced by the autocratic theory that government is superior to the people and must present every order the people

Hysteria similar to the present sedition law agitation swept through the country 130 years ago. An anti-sedition law was passed by congress, but when the people assumed their normal mental attitude they destroyed the political party that was responsible for that un-American legislation.

Since the time to prevent no attempt has been made to pass a sedition law, although several warships have sailed, including the great civil war, which was the most stupendous of its kind in the world's history.

HOSTILE EMPLOYERS LOOKING FOR "GOAT"

Boston, Feb. 7.—Anti-union employers are looking for a "goat" to blame the failure, last October, of the Industrial Conference, Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, current issue.

In an address to merchant tailors in this city, Martin B. Alexander put the "it" sign on Mr. Bernard Baruch, New York business man who was a member of the labor group in that conference.

Mr. Alexander, chairman director of the national industrial conference board, representing a score of employers' associations.

According to Mr. Alexander, one individual in conference, the commission's best up, and the organized workers would accept the employers' non-union shop (which they term "open shop") but for the political manipulations by the New Yorker.

The record, however, does not support the claim of this representative of the manufacturers. The unionists demanded collective bargaining and the right of workers to be represented through spokesmen of their own choosing. The manufacturers demanded the so-called "open shop," would recognize organizations of their own employes without connection with workers of the same craft in industrial plants and "open" collective bargaining that didn't bargain and was not collective.

The employers' position is best stated in their announcement in their public prospectus, issued after the commission had failed and the president told the employers' to go home. That prospectus published this "glittering generality":

"Collective bargaining as a policy of principle cannot be safely used in the broad and general sense with which the public has been accustomed to express it, but must be discussed and used as the subject of the varying conditions of industry and the varying relations that exist between wage earner and the employer."

EMPLOYERS WANT ALIENS.

Washington, Feb. 7.—In a speech on the floor of the house Congressman Mott of Oregon said:

"The history of the dealings of congress with immigration is the record of a continuous effort on the part of contract labor importers and other employer interests—mainly the latter—to protect the country against incoming criminals, prostitutes, paupers and contract labor.

"I have not found one statement that these laws are generally and effectually enforced. Again and again in the record of a period of more than 40 years is found the complaint of the violations or evasions of contract labor laws.

"Just now your committee (immigration) is besieged with appeals from industrial employers to close the door against incoming labor. This fact, considered with the other fact, should make American labor that these people are suit to be brought here to take the place of the American labor requirement that it be protected from the competition of an endless supply of European pauper labor.

"I know from first-hand knowledge that the employers of unskilled labor are now clamoring for pauper labor from Europe, China, Mexico and elsewhere, and that these special interests are strong enough in congressional circles to induce them to make the claim a very dangerous one."

UPHOLDS COMPENSATION.

Jefferson City, Mo., Feb. 7.—Opponents of the state workmen's compensation law have been defeated in their attacks on the legislation. The decision of the Cole county circuit court in the case of Jones vs. Crow, instantly enjoined from suspending the law and submitting it to the voters under the referendum.

This decision was made by a special master in chancery to whom the matter was referred by the court. The court's representative also finds that because of errors in the construction of the petitions and the ineligibility of many signers of the petitions, it is sufficient and that the law cannot be referred under these petitions. Another reason is that the law is not subject to the referendum because it was passed with an emergency clause. This, is, therefore, a peace, health and safety measure.

BAR MEXICAN LABORERS.

Washington, Feb. 7, The house committee on immigration has taken up Representative Johnson's bill to permit the temporary admission of Mexican farm laborers in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. Sugar beet growers claim there is a shortage of labor in these states and the immigration laws should be set aside.

The committee also opposed the removal of the head tax and the literacy test, so far as it applies to Mexico, Canada, Porto Rico and West Indian countries.

RAISE WAGES $3 A WEEK.

Toronto, Ontario, Feb. 7.—The strike of Hebrew bakers has been won by these workers, and raises are advanced $3 a week. The minimum is now $25 an hour for first men, $45 for second men and $40 for third men. These bakers are affiliated with the bona fide trade union movement.

IRON MOLDERS GAIN.

Bangor, Me., Feb. 7.—Iron molders in this city have increased wages and improved working conditions.

BRITISH UNIONIST DISCUSSES AMERICA

Washington, Feb. 7.—Revolutionary chatter in America does not impress William A. Appleton, writing in American Federationist, current issue, the writer is secretary of the British General Federation of Trade Unions and president of the International Federation of Trade Unions. His last visit to America was as a member of the international labor conference, established by the peace treaty.

"In estimating the future of America," says the British trade unionist, "it is of paramount importance to take into consideration the extraordinary power of the national spirit and the extent of the agricultural basis.

"American trade unionists will go a long wave to improve wages and conditions, but they will not go an inch to the barricades.

"Tourists who only see New York, Chicago, Detroit and other cities before their opinions have begun to be numerous, some times dreams of revolutionary revolutions, but their dreams are not likely to materialize.

"A buoyant, confident, all-pervading Americanism exists almost everywhere. It was the love of America, which determined her people's course in respect to alcohol; it is this love which feeds the passion for self-education and for the right to build buildings and monuments such as no other people contemplate. Some these buildings and monuments lack qualities which Europeans prefer, but they do not lack the expression of force and power and nationality.

"This great nation is divided into 48 sovereign states each jealous of its own rights and dignity, and yet possessed of the rights and dignity of the United States."

WOULD OUTLAW UNIONS.

Denver, Feb. 7.—Officers of the state federation of labor have notified affiliates to prepare to meet an advertising campaign by anti-union employers who are determined to secure the passage of legislation to outlaw trade union in this state. The act is known as the Booth-Fincher bill. It was introduced in the state senate defeated in the house. The Employers' association has made this announcement:

"It is the purpose of this association to secure the right to have the senate minority represented in all the papers of the state until the fall election which is heading. Do not vote for a member of the legislature not pledged to support the Booth-Fincher."

The employers declare that it is the shortest and most complete bill ever introduced in the interests of labor. Capital will be punished if it limits production or stores goods more than the limit.

Strikes or other collective action by trade unionists will come under this section:

"To attempt by interference with the employes of any person, firm or corporation by threats, or any means of coercion, to impede or hinder, or to prohibit the output of any person, firm or corporation."

MUSIC IS PROMISED.

Lackawanna, N. Y., Feb. 7.—In a public statement Corporation Counsel Wendell Phillips of Bethlehem says he will prove that the previous city administration was dominated by the Bethlehem Steel company and that the present administration is not in the company and "its lackeys."

He charges that an attempt was made by the steel strike to assist the steel company by provoking a riot, in which Mayor Frank error would send state troopers to this place, and by brutality take the place of Lackawanna's police and so break the strike.

"I never yet heard of the state troopers or state police being used for anything else except to break strikes," said the corporation counsel.

BISBEE MOBBERS ON TRIAL.

Bisbee, Ariz., Feb. 7.—The trial of members of the mob that deported Bisbee workers nearly three years ago is being tried here. The prosecution says important state witnesses have disappeared from the company force it to abandon many of the prosecution.

Among the "best citizens" of Bisbee took part in the mobbing. Twenty-five men were rounded up, placed in cattle cars and run out on the desert. The defendants claim they were actuated by patriotic motives, in this law and order lynching.

OPPOSE RENT GOUGERS.

New York, Feb. 7.—To resist the "exorbitant rent" being asked for the central federated union recommends that people who are united refuse to pay increased rent form community councils in the various boroughs of Greater New York.

The company set aside over $12,000,000 for depreciation, as compared with $11,000,000 in 1913.

PAN-AMERICAN UNITY NEEDED FOR WORKERS

Washington, Feb. 7.—The Pan-American Federation of Labor has issued a manifesto to the workers of all the American continents. The attention is called to the third Pan-American congress to be held in the City of Mexico, beginning July 12 next.

The document is signed by Samuel Gompers, C. A. Vargas and James Lord, president, secretary and treasurer, respectively, of the Pan-American Federation of Labor. Workers in the various American countries are urged to prepare now for the congress and to "consider the manifesto says:

"Until a short time ago there had been no means of communication between the masses of the peoples of the American countries. The only relations existing were those established by the financial, commercial and industrial interests, and, as every one knows these interests are not always actuated by a desire to promote the welfare of the people, but by the desire for the higher and nobler ideals of the peoples of the American countries. These interests are actuated by selfish motives, namely, profits, profits and more profits. In their mad rush for material aggrandizement they completely lose sight of the rights and the interest of humanity.

"Since the financial, commercial and industrial interests of Pan-America are actuated by selfish motives, namely, profits, profits and more profits, in